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Heritage Taxonomy: towards a common language?

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ABSTRACT: The heritage taxonomy presented, is to stimulate discussion on developing a common language in heritage management. Can it support more effective governance and the comparative study of empirical data to foster knowledge sharing co-learning? Charting the evolution of heritage concepts and subsequent management approaches in supranational policy documents led to a domain dependent taxonomy, reflecting the evolution of heritage concepts over the last 50 years. In this paper the development of such taxonomy is explored and discussed. The taxonomy was tested and revised with academics from various heritage-related disciplines. Moreover, the application of the taxonomy in comparative analysis is proposed. Although the taxonomy grew enormously with the widening of the heritage concept, it is still limited. It is therefore very important to always remain open-minded towards new, previously unrecognized conceptualizations of heritage, and include them in the taxonomy.

1 INTRODUCTION: HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

1.1 *A landscape approach for heritage management*

Urban development and heritage management have often been positioned as opposing powers in the management of the historic environment. Heritage is seen as one of the ‘usual suspects’ of local grass-roots opposition to urban development, while development pressures are perceived as endangering heritage. In heritage theory and supranational policy, the trend is to recommend a holistic, integrated and multidisciplinary management of resources, by means of a new approach in heritage management: the landscape approach (Van Oers & Pereira Roders 2014; Veldpaus 2015; Bandarin & Van Oers 2015). The focus of such approach is the integral management of urban resources and the values people ascribe to them. Landscape is defined as an inclusive and holistic platform that cannot be understood or managed except through an approach that embraces all its components (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2012; Brown 2015; CoE 2000; Goetcheus & Mitchell 2014; Taylor et al. 2015). Heritage management as a cultural practice has long been primarily about conserving the fabric of the past for future generations. The historic urban landscape approach is pushing for a more development-minded approach. It is not about allowing (or disallowing) transformation in itself, but about establishing and guiding the nature of the transformation (Cortina 2011; Dalglish 2012). It addresses the future quality of the urban landscape and the relationships forming it. This goes hand in hand with a shift in thinking in culture- and heritage-led studies. The focus of those fields has traditionally been on materiality, and on aiming to decipher embodied meaning and social expectations (Latham & McCormack 2004). More recently however, the focus is on understanding the material and immaterial as resources of a more performative, constitutive nature. Following actor-network theory, heritage theory is moving towards defining objects as actors or agents, creators of value, rather than as symbols that represent value (Yaneva 2013; Pendlebury 2013; Veldpaus & Roders 2014). Heritage is seen as the ever-present interplay of resources, standards and values, cross-linking

past, present and future societies (De la Torre 2014; Winter 2012). To manage such interplay in a more integral and ethical way, heritage is conditionally framed by a conceptual landscape that incorporates social, economic and environmental factors, through space and time (Agnoletti 2014; Stobbelaar & Pedroli 2011). Such a landscape easily crosses policies, nations, disciplines and scales, and thus also the boundaries that would traditionally be defined to manage heritage in an urban context.

1.2 Heritage Taxonomy for heritage management

To manage heritage, a wide range of policies, laws, and regulation is readily available. They are evolving as the understanding of heritage is widening and becoming much more dynamic. Policies that influence heritage are not only ranging from supranational to subnational levels of governance, but also vary in discipline e.g. cultural, spatial, environmental, social, or financial. Furthermore policies and laws that do not have a specific aim to deal with heritage can have impact on heritage management (see for example Vadi 2014). Whether the policies and laws that apply are very rigid, more indicative, or mostly absent, they have impact on the historic built environment, historic preservation, and the perception of heritage. They not only set limits of acceptable change, but also effectively decide what is considered heritage, officially but also perceptually, in more general terms. Therefore it is important to go beyond a theoretical discussion on heritage concepts, and reveal, compare, and if needed change the way they are reflected in policies.

Heritage management is a cultural practice. As such, an inclusive and on-going debate – a process of reconsideration, redevelopment and reiteration of the concepts and idea(l)s that define heritage management – is indispensable. Veldpaus (2015) traced part of this debate, as solidified in supranational heritage policies, to reveal the embedded concepts of heritage and their evolution over time. This analysis was led by the questions: What is heritage? Why is heritage heritage? Who is involved in the process of heritage management? And how is heritage being managed? As such, a domain dependent and evolutionary taxonomy of heritage was identified in those supranational policies (Veldpaus 2015). This taxonomy consists of a list of categories, divided into four main parts: WHAT, WHY, WHO, and HOW (FIGURE X). WHAT consists of categories of tangible and intangible attributes; cultural value categories make up the WHY part; actor categories in the WHO part; and a list of process steps in the HOW part (Veldpaus & Pereira Roders 2014b; Veldpaus & Roders 2014). This paper explores the further development of this taxonomy and its applications.

The aim is to come to a more widely supported and shared set of definitions, or at least to stimulate discussion on developing a common language. To explore if it could support more effective governance, allow for wider comparative studies of empirical data, and foster knowledge sharing. There is a general consensus on the idea that what society values, and why, is constantly changing, and as such the approaches society develops to deal with heritage will probably keep changing too (Harvey 2001; Holtorf 2012; Logan 2012). Therefore, both clarity and flexibility are needed when it comes to developing and using such common language.

2 TAXONOMY FOR ANALYSES

The taxonomy embedded in supranational heritage policies, it is assumed in this research, can be used in the analysis of policies and practices, e.g. to compare the concepts in supranational policies to other levels of governance. By cross-referencing the domain-dependent taxonomy (figure X) the heritage concepts can be related to each other and sources can be coded. By repeating this, sources can also be compared. The taxonomy is intended to reveal differences and similarities. The aim is for it to be applicable in analyses and its results to feed into discussion, not to replace the discussion or to judge the results. Discussing the taxonomy can reveal intentional or unintentional gaps in used terminology in a specific setting (Veldpaus 2015). While the possibilities to apply the taxonomy are numerous, it should be noted that there are limitations. By its very - evolving – nature, the taxonomy does not cover the full range of possible categories. This taxonomy only reflects the concepts found in supranational guidelines. As such, the

taxonomy is not yet complete or comprehensive. The taxonomy should be seen as a first version, to be further discussed and developed in the coming decades. Results of analysis using the taxonomy may be seen as a first indicator of a preference, or lack thereof, for certain categories, which subsequently need to be discussed and put into context.

3 TAXONOMY DEVELOPED

As shown (Figure 1) there are various ongoing cycles of testing and developing the taxonomy. The documents (the left side of the scheme) in this research were supranational documents. There are multiple actions that could be taken in order to complement the taxonomy based on supranational heritage policies. One of them is analyzing more policies, for example those directed at specific global regions or Nation States, those with a thematic specification (e.g. underwater heritage, natural heritage) or developed in other disciplinary fields (e.g. urban planning, archaeology). Analyzing heritage management practices by various stakeholders will also be instrumental in the process. As ideas and values can differ today and continue to evolve tomorrow, so can this taxonomy, reflecting its time and actors.

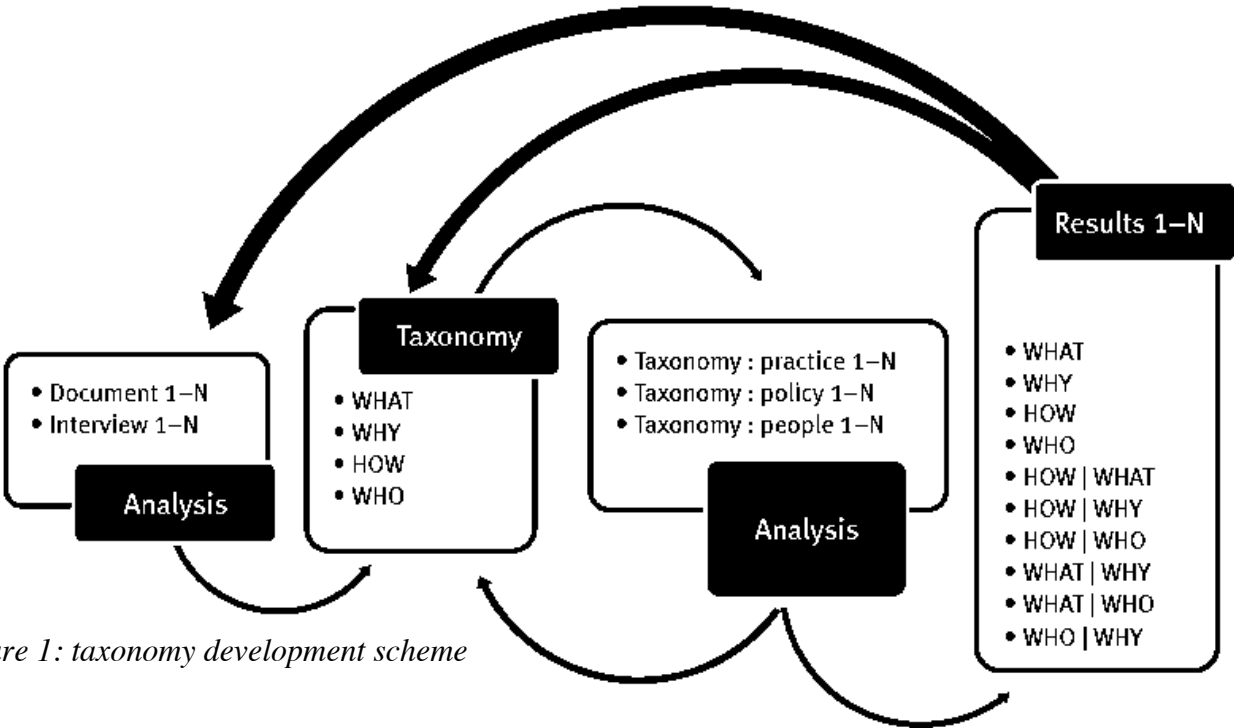


Figure 1: taxonomy development scheme

The challenge for further developing the taxonomy is to keep an open mind in analyzing the sources, and to find out where the taxonomy can be expanded, improved or changed, while testing and further applying the taxonomy to improve its validity. As such, it should be used with caution when analysing policies and practices. It is very possible that additional categories of attributes, values, actors and process steps will be identified.

	What	Why	Who	How
What	Attributes	Attributes x Values	Attributes x Actors	Attributes x Steps
Why	Values x Attributes	Values	Values x Actors	Values x Steps
Who	Actors x Attributes	Actors x Values	Actors	Actors x Steps
How	Steps x Attributes	Steps x Values	Steps x Actors	Steps

Figure 2: Matrix cross-relating taxonomy

By using taxonomy, and cross-relating it, a complex framework for comparative analysis, possibly large-N comparison, can be developed (Figure 2). As such, comparison could be done

on a much bigger scale; between levels of governance and/or disciplines. To raise complexity further, such a comparison could be executed through time, place and society, as well as between or among practices, policies and theories.

4TAXONOMY TESTED

Testing of the taxonomy among governmental stakeholders in Amsterdam had revealed some level of confusion, especially regarding the attribute categories of the taxonomy (Veldpaus 2015). To further investigate this, follow-up research was done across academic heritage related disciplines.

4.1.1 Method

A group of 12 academics from various disciplines (archaeology, architecture, anthropology, art history, heritage management, landscape studies, urbanism, cultural management) and various European universities (i.e. universities in France, Spain, the Netherlands, Serbia, Poland, Germany and the UK), working the field of heritage studies were asked to give their own professional definitions of the terms used in the taxonomy. The question being '*Please write down how you define the following words, as to how (if at all) you would use them in your daily (academic) practice*' for the following attribute categories:

Tangible attributes	Intangible attributes
1. Building	1. Concept or artistic trend
2. Building element	2. Relation(s) to context (location)
3. Urban element	3. Character
4. Natural element	4. Use, function
5. Ensemble	5. Knowledge, traditions, customs
6. Context or setting	6. Relation(s) to meaning (association)
7. Area	7. Community / people(s)
8. Layering	8. Short term / planned processes (development)
9. Landscape	9. Long term / unplanned processes (evolution)

The answers were compared to identify if definitions were shared or varied. All answers were combined into a definition covering the main message and additional variations. The main definition is the one found in at least three quarters of the given answers. Varieties on the common definition are added, and different definitions have been distinguished.

4.1.2 Academic definitions

Although the sample is not representative of the heritage sector, the results indicate that there is not that much confusion over the terminology in heritage studies among academics in Europe. The sample (n=12) was too small and the range of backgrounds and countries too wide to compare between disciplines or European regions. In general, the results show that tangible attributes are better known than intangible ones. For the tangible attributes, only 7 of the 108 answers were left blank, whereas for the intangible attributes 28 were left blank (Figure 3). In addition, most definitions of tangible concepts show a high level of commonality. *Relation(s) to meaning, association* (15) and *Long-term/unplanned processes, evolution* (18) were the least known, and had the most blanks (5 and 4, respectively).

A main definition was developed using the commonality among the given answers. This common definition is shared between at least 80% of the provided definitions. For more than half of the 18 cases an extra definition was given by one or two participants, only three of those were really different (4, 17, 18). Those 'other' definitions are the ones that differ from the understanding of the main definition. For example, the commonly shared main definition of a natural element (4) would be: '*Component, part, aspect produced by nature.*' The additional characteristics are that such an element gives a certain characteristic, exists in or is produced by nature, and can be tangible and intangible. Some answered it is only that which is untouched by humans, which would be a limiting characteristic. One answer, however, defines a natural ele-

ment as a ‘*natural component, constitutive element of a city, city plan*’, referring more to an element representing the nature of the city than an element of nature itself.

Type	Taxonomy definition	Definition from first version of taxonomy	Common Definition - academics (N=12)	Additional characteristics - academics (N=12)	Other / Additional definition (s) - academics (N=12)	No answer
tangible attributes	1 Building Element	Parts of buildings e.g. Detail, parcel, facade, roof, material, or colours.	Part, component, material, feature, section of a building.	Physical, specific, constructive, decorative part; adds value / functionality, is mostly tangible, constituting a separate unit.		1
	2 Building	Entire buildings	Structure, construction, edifice, remains	Host human activities, storage, and other purposes; is solid, fixed, physical, sheltering; is an assembly of materials, needs attention, above ground, from any period; also has immaterial features.	Art of building (verb)	1
	3 Urban Element	Man made elements in the urban landscape e.g. A square, bridge, street furniture, quay side, or public art.	Component, part, aspect of / in urban context (urban landscape, urban space, urban environment, city, townscape, urban agglomeration)	Adds value / functionality, gives a certain characteristic, is a construction, structure, space, or action, can be tangible and intangible, is constitutive, and created by buildings or human activities	The uses, practices, actions in the urban space	1
	4 Natural Element	Natural (or designed) green elements, flora or fauna, water elements, etc.	Component, part, aspect produced by nature	Gives a certain characteristic, is untouched by humans, is existing in or produced by nature, can be tangible and intangible; independent of location; aspects existing in nature context	The constitutive nature of the city	0
	5 Ensemble	A group of buildings or specific urban ensemble or configuration.	Group, set, unit, compilation of urban / cultural elements	Generates / represents specific history, show harmony / coherence / correlation in significance, location, values, and /or practices; can be tangible and intangible; with recognizable internal (inter)relations.		1
	6 Context, Setting	The buildings or elements surrounding, supporting, contextualising the actual heritage.	Surrounding environment (or landscape), physical, societal, temporal.	Situating, adds understanding, specific, an assemblage of fluctuating relations		0
	7 Area	A district in a wider (urban) landscape, a specific combination of cultural and or natural elements, e.g. a neighbourhood, urban fragment, urban structure, townscape, route or park.	A conditionally defined place or space	Creates a context, measurable, broader, bounded, no strict borders, defined by its geographical and cultural features		1
	8 Layering	Illustrative of the evolution or development of human society and settlement over time, a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and its natural environment.	Accumulating phases (periods) of activity and/or value, and evidence that exists for indicating the phases	Historic, chronological, subsequent, alterations and/or additions	Stratigraphy / strata Multiple ways of perceiving landscape	2
	9 Landscape	Every part of the landscape is considered to be of value, and all attributes get a level of significance.	Territory delimited subjectively and conditionally - as perceived, experienced by observer including human/cultural/natural factors	Holistic, provoking an aesthetic judgment, result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors, cultural and natural attributes	Natural environment of certain qualities, associated with the visual capabilities of the observer	0
intangible attributes	10 Concept, Artistic Trend	The ideas behind the design or place, e.g. Period, style, design ideology (often related to, or represented by, a tangible heritage asset)	(Sets of) norms, values, expression, style in arts/architecture – and the development (phase, evolution) thereof, the intended idea	Long-term / over a given period, iterated, defined by style or aesthetic decisions, culturally specific, mainstream		1
	11 Relation(s) to Context (Location)	The relation with another connected element, location, place, or environment (relation object – object).	Attachment to / interaction between object/place and its geospatial context	Geographical proximity, developed or conceived and executed in relation to location	Interrelation of time, place and society	2
	12 Character	The character or image, as supported by specific design, e.g. Typology, morphology, layout, composition and proportion, as well as, atmosphere e.g. Tranquil, lively, urban, rural.	(Set of) attributes of specific nature or quality, defining features.	Aesthetics or historic significance, as manifested /receiver by people, reviving memories and stimulating senses, intangible, defines an entity, combination of customs		2
	13 Use, Function	The specific (typical, common, special) use or function of a place or environment.	Practical / instrumental value, purpose, of object / landscape; function= regardless human interaction; use refers to human interaction			2
	14 Knowledge, Traditions, Customs	The (local) practices, traditions, knowledge, customs of a community or groups (often related to a location or tangible results, tools / instruments).	Transmitted/repeated, evolving, phenomena associated with a place or culture; understanding of the world by a group of people	Collective, experienced/practiced, linked to certain features, tangible & intangible	Intangible heritage	2
	15 Relation(s) to Meaning (Association)	Human associations with a place, element, location, or environment (relation men – object).	Connotations, feelings, meaning, cognitive links	In relation to context, remembered or imagined, socially constructed		4
	16 Community, People(s)	A community or society itself (its members, or specific individuals / groups) and/ or their cultural identity or diversity.	Group of people that shares characteristics, has common denominators	Shared characteristics only geographically defined; e.g. inhabiting, interacting with, connected to, interested in, or visiting.	Shared characteristics wider defined: e.g. Identity, ethnicity, culture, customs, beliefs, roots, traditions, actions, territorial, interests, practices etc.	1
	17 Planned Processes / Development	The process of managing, the type of strategy or approach (instead of the result) is what is valuable.	Actions (alteration, construction, design) that are intentional, planned, controlled, and/or determined by strategies and policies (bureaucracy)	Systematic and organized, initiated with common purpose and vision	The process of introducing new and modern, not necessarily well planned.	2
	18 Unplanned Processes / Evolution	The process of layering, development, or evolution (instead of the result).	Unplanned, piecemeal, spontaneous change	Adapts naturally; without a common initial vision; without intervention of policies or strategies; unorganized; improvised.	Biological change	3

Figure 3: definitions by academics combined

The other extra definitions confirm the main definition but also provide an additional one. For example, the main definition of 'urban element' is: '*a component, part, structure, or aspect of or in an urban context.*' The additional characteristics are that such an element adds value and/or functionality, gives a certain characteristic, is a construction, structure, space, can be tangible and intangible, is constitutive and created by buildings or human activities. All answers point towards the common definition; however, two of the answers explicitly state that also the uses, practices and actions in the urban space should be considered urban elements. This was considered an additional characteristic to the main definition that deviates from the understanding of the definition as most of the answers share.

There seems to be some confusion due to the breaking down of concepts. A few participants aimed for more holistic answers. For example, some defined 'context' as positioning the heritage asset in space, time and society. This is a perfectly good and holistic definition. This holistic definition of 'context' as a concept could include all or only one of these: *context or setting* (6) and *relation(s) to context* (11), as well as *knowledge, traditions and customs* (14), *relation(s) to meaning* (15), *concepts and layering* (9) and *artistic trends* (10). However, the aim of the taxonomy was to break down those bigger concepts in order to be able to be more precise and categorize. This can be of value in the heritage management process, as the different 'forms' of context have different implications for what to protect. Is it the actual object that is important in contextualizing the heritage asset? Or is it the atmosphere it creates? Is it use of the space, or the memory it provokes? They can all be related, and they often are, although separately they all have different implications for the focus of urban management and the limits of acceptable change.

That intangible heritage can be considered in a wider and a more narrow perspective is shown by the fact that two participants defined the category '*knowledge, traditions and customs*' as 'intangible heritage'. This makes for a loop in definition. It indicates that the definition of intangible heritage, while here defined with 9 categories (10–18) is perhaps more easily associated with *knowledge, traditions and customs* (14) than with all other categories.

All in all, there is a strong commonality within each of the definitions, and while the adjectives vary, they are never opposing. At most they vary in specificity, as for example with community (16), which is defined as a '*group of people that shares characteristics, has common denominators*'. However, some defined those characteristics geographically, while others widened the definition to include more general characteristics, for example beliefs and interests.

When comparing the taxonomy with the definitions given by the academics, there are a few issues to be highlighted. The definition of landscape as used in the policy analysis tool is a description of the landscape approach, not a description of 'landscape'. In addition, in general the academic definitions are much more detailed and nuanced. As such, they can very well be used to improve the taxonomy definitions.

4.2 Taxonomy discussed

In contrast to what was revealed by the study with governmental stakeholders and by other studies (During 2010; Printsman et al. 2012; Stephenson 2008; Stobbelaar & Pedrolí 2011), this study did not find confusion over terminology. That, however, does not mean that there is no confusion. The sample is not only too small to generalize the results, but it also comprised only of academics. Earlier research showed that among policymakers some of the terminology was unknown or confusing, and there might also be a difference between the policymakers and the academics. Moreover, all academics were working in Europe, which makes the general results, if at all, valid only for the European region. The concept of heritage as represented by supranational policies has been criticized as being a European invention, being Eurocentric (Willems 2014; Winter 2013) and supporting an 'authorized heritage discourse' (Pendlebury 2013; Smith 2006). The taxonomy presented here is derived from those supranational policies and as such could be criticized in a similar manner. Testing the understanding and definition of the taxonomy within a group of European academic experts does not counter this criticism. As such, it would be very pertinent to further test and develop the taxonomy with stakeholders from outside Europe.

The landscape approach is a tool for integration. The taxonomy as a whole is to be holistic in the combination of the separate categories. While the idea was to break down the concept of

heritage, this is countered by the aim of the academics to actually combine the tangible and intangible within most of their definitions. This indicates that another categorization for the taxonomy might be something to further explore. Not as it is now – tangible/intangible – but for example space, time, society, or product, practice, process. Another classification in this context is that developed by Stephenson (2008), who used the ‘insider perspective’ to develop a categorization of landscape values, and came to a division of forms, practices and relationships.

As discussed, testing the taxonomy is to be repeated and expanded. As shown before, there are many definitions of heritage. Although new ones appear, others do not necessarily disappear, and many definitions exist in parallel. For all those definitions, however, though applied with a specific disciplinary bias, it seems important that there is a process of people (who) assigning value (why) to something (what). As an analysis showed (Veldpaus & Pereira Roders 2014a), supranational policy in the past worked with a limited taxonomy. Who, what and why were restricted. This probably led to the exclusion of many conceptualizations of heritage, and definitely had an impact on the perception of the definition of heritage. The widening of the definition of heritage that has been detected by many in recent decades relates to slowly letting go of some of the restrictions it was subject to. HUL aims at a process in which the attributes (what) and values (why) are not restricted. Although the taxonomy grew enormously, it is still limited – but that is inherent to taxonomy. It is therefore very important to always remain open-minded towards new, previously unrecognized conceptualizations of heritage. Analysing descriptions of heritage using the what, why, how and who questions, without directly categorizing, supports such open mindedness. It is also important to keep track of the already recognized categories, to be able to monitor their use and compare empirical data. The taxonomy can also be used to show the impact of the limiting character of taxonomy in the past.

4.3A taxonomy-based framework as a method

The taxonomy supports a more tailored implementation of the concepts from supranational guidelines in heritage management into the subnational policy context. The results in Amsterdam (Veldpaus 2015) confirm this, as the policy analysis tool allowed the interviewees to assess, reflect, and decide whether or not to review their policies in relation to what is being recommended. Breaking down the heritage concept and discussing the smaller pieces per process step seems to break down the main narrative as carried out by the local representatives. Putting the narrative back together reveals known and unknown gaps in policy, such as a focus on tangible attribute categories and the traditional value category, but also a lack of monitoring and the relatively low involvement of community in certain process steps. The sample grid also allows an understanding of the differences in focus between urban and heritage policies. To really understand and validate the working of the policy analysis tool, further research is needed – not only on a wider range of case studies and stakeholders, but also on defining the heritage concepts that make up the taxonomy.

While further research is needed to refine and optimize the tool and taxonomy, the testing also confirmed that such a taxonomy-based tool is promising for the analysis of urban and heritage policies. It offers a way to produce structured and comparative results on a qualitative and a quantitative level. Moreover, the taxonomy seemed to challenge the participants in Amsterdam to reflect on their definition of heritage and revealed differences in definition between departments.

5 DISCUSSION

As stated, the policy analysis tool was not developed to judge the appropriateness of subnational policies or rate their success. The aim is to understand *how* subnational policies are composed in relation to supranational recommendations, by understanding which concepts of cultural heritage are used and how. This is only a start; more case studies should follow to further confirm the validity of the tool, and develop the taxonomy further. Moreover, more stakeholder groups could be involved, and a sequence of workshops in one city would also give more insights into the value of the tool as a policy monitoring tool. The tool is only one application of

the taxonomy. The taxonomy as a theoretical framework for a comparative analysis tool is also to be tested further, possibly even an automated version.

The taxonomy underpinning this framework was derived from supranational reference texts. However, when this taxonomy is used by the various stakeholders for the analysis of existing policies or other heritage management practices, it might very well prove to be incomplete. A periodic inventory of suggested additions can provide evidence-based arguments as to the revision or development of future supranational reference texts.

By using a pre-set taxonomy as a point of reference, it is possible to reveal changes in policies throughout time and/or in place, and stakeholders gain a common ground. Ideas and values differ and evolve, as should this taxonomy, as then it will continue to reflect its time and actors and to create insights into the rationale behind heritage management. In this way, the process of reconsidering and redirecting the involved policies can be informed, to continue protecting what society values, reflecting their cultural identity.

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